

LINCOLN PARK
(Reservation No. 14)
East Capitol Street between Eleventh
and 13th streets, SE and SW quadrants
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-677

HABS
DC
WASH
614~

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HABSDC WASH 614/-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LINCOLN PARK
(Reservation Number 14)

HABS No. DC-677

Location: East Capitol Street between Eleventh and 13th streets, SE and SW quadrants.

Owner/Manager: U.S. government, National Park Service.

Use: Sitting park, playground, monument site.

Significance: L'Enfant designated a large park one mile east of the U.S. Capitol at the convergence of four avenues. Set aside as a large rectangle on the Ellicott Plan, it has been landscaped as a park since the 1870s, and has become significant for its association with black history and the African-American Civil Rights Movement. It is located within National Register's Capitol Hill Historic District. The Emancipation Statue, which depicts Abraham Lincoln freeing a slave, is one of the Civil War Monuments in Washington, D.C., on the National Register of Historic Places.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of plan: 1791, L'Enfant Plan; 1792, Ellicott Plan.
2. Original and subsequent owners: Within a tract of land known as the Houpyard, owned by George Walker, the land for the park was acquired by the federal government for streets and avenues in 1791.¹
3. Original plans and construction: A plan was devised in 1855, but whether it was ever used is unknown. It included straight paths and coping. The first documented improvements were made between 1871-75.
4. Alterations and additions:
 - 1874: Lodge erected west of the center path on the southern side of the park. Brick fountains installed.
 - 1875: Old wood fence replaced by a new post-and-chain fence. Fifteen lampposts erected.
 - 1876: Emancipation statue set in place. Two additional paths cut from East Capitol Street to the main walk leading to the statue and two lights erected to illuminate these paths.
 - 1914: New lodge constructed on the east side of the park.
 - 1931: Park redesigned. Old walks removed, area graded and 5,268 square yards of concrete added. Two concrete sandboxes replaced by three new ones. Two existing display fountains replaced by two new

¹ McNeil, 43; Toner, "Sketch of Washington in Embryo."

ones.²

1974: Park relandscaped for the erection of the Mary McLeod Bethune statue.

B. Historical Context:

On Pierre L'Enfant's plan of Washington, the area now designated as Lincoln Park is indicated as a rectangular-shaped open area formed by the convergence of East Capitol Street with Massachusetts, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina avenues between Eleventh and 13th streets. It holds a prominent place in the plan and is marked with the letter B. L'Enfant's accompanying references describe "B" as the site for "an historic column--also intended for a Mile or itinerary Column, from whose station, (a mile from the Federal House) all distances of places throughout the Continent are to be calculated." Although it was not among the seventeen parcels appropriated March 30, 1791, by President George Washington expressly for public park land and federal reservations, it was part of the more than 3,606 acres acquired for the creation of streets and alleys by the federal government from the nineteen proprietors who owned the land selected for the nation's capital. The approximately seven-acre rectangle was located on the most elevated portion of a tract of land called the Houpyard, owned by George Walker. It rivalled the height of the hill chosen for the Capitol, and a column placed upon it would have been visible for miles.³

The park was little more than a refuse heap until the Civil War when it became the site of a Union hospital, which soldiers sardonically called Lincoln Hospital in honor of the commander-in-chief. A map compiled between 1857-61 reveals that the neighborhood was sparsely settled, but following the war, the hospital was dismantled and people who owned property in this unimproved section of the city petitioned Congress to name the park and improve it. It was officially designated as Lincoln Square by an 1866 act of Congress to memorialize the leader assassinated April 14, 1865.⁴ That year Commissioner of Public Buildings Benjamin B. French stated in his annual report to the Secretary of the Interior, "This would be a very great improvement to that portion of the eastern part of the city where Congress has never yet bestowed any of its benefactions, and which it is fondly hoped will ere long be remembered."⁵

By 1872, the square was "inclosed (sic) in a picket fence and partly improved."⁶ In 1867, responsibility for the upkeep of the parks had been transferred from the Department of Interior to the Department of War, and until 1933, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPB&G) would be managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. OPB&G Officer, Col. Orville E. Babcock requested

² Annual Report . . ., 1932, 33.

³ Hawkins, 19, 29.

⁴ Olszewski, 6.

⁵ French, 1866, 7.

⁶ Annual Report . . ., 1872, 23.

\$8,500 to pave walkways through the park and erect a lodge in 1871, and repeated the request again in 1872. Babcock was also a close friend of Alexander Shepherd, head of the Board of Public Works. A charismatic leader and Washington native, Shepherd oversaw vast infrastructural improvements in the city from 1871-74. By 1872, the board had paved East Capitol Street with wood all the way to the park; in tandem with this increased accessibility, Babcock recommended erecting a post-and-chain fence around the park, completing the walks, erecting a lodge with mens' and women's toilets, and "embellishing it in a manner commensurate with its name, and to compare favorably in beauty and attractiveness with any of the public squares in the city." He continued, "This should be done in honor of the illustrious and lamented Lincoln, after whom the square was named."⁷ In 1874 the OPB&G erected a lodge, similar to the one in Franklin Square, with toilets on each side and the necessary connections with water and sewer pipes. It was described as "ornamental, and its accommodations of much value to the public, and prevents the committing of nuisances."⁸

The improvements to Lincoln Park were almost complete by 1875. The organic pattern of curving walks encircling oval grass panels and flower beds reflected Andrew Jackson Downing's 1851 plan for the Mall. Two ornamental fountains with spray jets were placed at the entrances on the north and south sides of the park and a mound was made in the center oval for a colossal statue or an historical column. The lodge was located several yards southwest of the central mound.

One year later, on April 14, 1876--the eleventh anniversary of Lincoln's assassination--the bronze statue group of Abraham Lincoln freeing a slave was dedicated in the park. It was not placed on the central mound, but toward the west end of the park facing the Capitol; a formal walkway, or mall, was designed to lead from the west side of the park to the statue. It is likely that this formal approach also created a vista from the statue to the U.S. Capitol dome eleven blocks west of the park.

President Ulysses S. Grant and his cabinet attended the dignified unveiling ceremony, and Frederick Douglass gave the principle speech. Called "Emancipation," the statue shows Lincoln granting freedom to a crouching and shackled slave. Sculptor Thomas Ball was paid \$17,000 for the statue which was erected by the Western Sanitary Commission with funds contributed solely by freed slaves. The first contribution of \$5 was made by Charlotte Scott, a freed slave from Virginia who originally conceived of the idea of honoring the assassinated emancipator with a statue. Scott approached her employer, William R. Rucker, with her idea for a statue and her first earnings made in freedom. Within two weeks, James E. Yeatman of the Western Sanitary Commission agreed to receive funds for such a commission. The largest response to the fund-raising effort came from black veterans of the Union Army.⁹

The reservation became a popular tourist attraction for those wishing to pay homage to the slain leader and came to be known as Freedom Park. Designed to encourage rest and reflection the park was also a site for religious gatherings and

⁷ Annual Report . . ., 1872, 13.

⁸ Annual Report . . ., 1874, 6.

⁹ Nickels, 20.

band and orchestral concerts throughout the next four or five decades. The park was regularly maintained by the OPB&G whose routine improvements included painting the fence and lodge and filling the flower beds seasonally with plantings. Fountains were an extravagance in the city, and they required a great deal of maintenance and water, which was often in short supply. "The fountains in Lincoln and Stanton parks were repaired and put in running order," the chief officer reported in 1885, "but on view of the small supply of water now available for Capitol Hill the water is not turned on for more than an hour each day."¹⁰

Elegant homes were soon built facing onto the beautiful park, and more modest homes were erected on the streets leading to it. When the Lincoln Memorial on the Mall was completed in 1922, attendance at Lincoln Park waned, and it became a quiet neighborhood park. The Depression, coupled with the expansion of the federal government and the growing popularity of the suburbs, brought a decline in the prosperity of the neighborhood in the 1930s. In 1909 President William Howard Taft had suggested that the new Supreme Court Building be erected facing the park, then in the 1930s, the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in New York sponsored a contest to erect thirteen buildings around the square, which would be renamed Independence Square. The plan also called for replacing the elegant, but unfashionable Victorian houses on East Capitol Street with large, classical buildings. Both proposals were adamantly rejected by the local populace who wanted to retain the quiet residential quality of the neighborhood in contrast to the northwest quadrant, which was becoming a commercial enclave.¹¹

In the midst of these controversies, the park was neglected, and was targeted for rehabilitation under the provisions of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The new design installed by the workers in the 1930s was doubtlessly influenced by the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., on the Mall. The old walks were removed, and 5,268 square yards of concrete were used to pave new linear walkways providing direct routes from the surrounding streets to the various attractions in the park. The two old concrete sandboxes were replaced by three new ones, as were the display fountains that had been in the park since the 1870s.¹²

This plan remained in place for the next four decades, during which there were few changes to the surrounding neighborhood, despite the drastic changes taking place throughout the rest of the city. Because of its tradition as "Freedom Park," the space was used throughout the 1960s for freedom rallies led by Civil Rights activists.

In 1968, a redevelopment plan was devised for the park to include a multipurpose recreation area with basketball hoops in the southwest corner of the park and a passive recreation area with chess and checker tables in the northwest area. Although it was never carried out, a similar plan was prepared in 1973 to incorporate a new statue group to complement the almost 100-year-old Lincoln Statue. The bronze statue group honoring educator and social reformer Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) was dedicated at a ceremony on July 10 of that year. Sculpted by Robert Berks, the group features Bethune with her characteristic cane,

¹⁰ Annual Report . . ., 1885, 3837.

¹¹ Olszewski, 9.

¹² Annual Report . . ., 1932, 33.

handing a scroll to two children. The statue was originally planned by the National Council of Negro Women in the late 1950s, but due to lack of funds and the group's involvement in the Civil Rights movement the statue was not erected until 1974.¹³

In the new park layout, the Emancipation Group has been rotated to face the Bethune statue to the east side, set of the park in a semicircular paved area. Between the two statues is large open green; two circular playground areas flank the statue on the east.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Overall dimensions: Lincoln Park is an approximately 865' x 385' rectangle covering an area of about 7 acres.
- B. Materials:
 - 1. Perimeter sidewalks: Concrete paver walks surround the park.
 - 2. Pathways, paving: Concrete pavers are used throughout the park. A wide path runs east from Eleventh Street on axis with East Capitol Street. It meets a large square terrace with benches, planters, and the Emancipation Statue. Paths on axis with Twelfth Street provide access to the statue from the north and south. At the east side of the terrace, three risers lead down to a sunken green featuring a central play area surrounded by a perimeter walks. East of the rectangular green additional paths lead north and south. The Bethune Group is contained in a semicircular plaza flanked on the north and south by circular "tiny tot play areas" floored with springy rubber matting. Two paths on line with the sidewalks on East Capitol Street lead from the Bethune statue to 13th Street. A dirt path just inside the perimeter sidewalk provides a route for joggers.
 - 3. Vegetation:
 - a. Grass: Grass covers the panels between the paths as well as the open green between the two statues.
 - b. Trees, shrubs, hedges: Tall shade trees surround the park perimeter and are scattered throughout the grassy areas. Ornamental magnolias line the Emancipation Group terrace and central green, while oaks and lindens surround the Bethune group plaza. Eight linden trees form rows on the north and south sides of the Emancipation Group, planted in square cutouts. This area also features evergreen shrubs in planters spaced evenly between the benches around the perimeter. The sidewalk on the north side of the central green is interrupted to preserve a large willow oak, one of the older specimens in the park.
 - c. Flowers, seasonal plantings: Large rectangular beds between the

¹³ Goode, 87.

interior paths on the east and west sides of the park feature seasonal flowers.

3. Structures:

- a. Fences, retaining walls: An approximately 3'-tall exposed-concrete aggregate retaining wall surrounds the sunken area in the center with the open green and perimeter sidewalks. Treated round wood posts form rustic retaining walls for both of the round "tiny tot play areas." A metal-picket fence lines the east side of the round Bethune Group plaza.
- b. Benches: The sunken green and Bethune Group areas feature concrete-support, wood-slat benches. The raised Emancipation Group area features similarly constructed backless benches.
- c. Statues, monuments:
 1. The Emancipation Monument: Designed by sculptor Thomas Ball with a base designed by OPB&G Chief Orville E. Babcock, this life-sized bronze sculpture group of Abraham Lincoln and a crouching slave faces east.
 2. Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial: Designed by sculptor Robert Berks, this bronze statue group of Mary McLeod Bethune and two children was erected in the park in 1974. Dedicated July 10, 1974, Bethune's birthday, the \$400,000 sculpture was erected by the National Council of Negro Women.¹⁴
- d. Fountains: Two drinking fountains are located north and south of the Bethune Group and another is located in the grassy area in the northwest quadrant of the park.
- e. Lighting: Mushroom lamps are interspersed throughout the park. Tall spotlights in the southeast and northwest corners of the panels flanking the central green focus on the Bethune Group. Washington Globe standards have been recently installed along the central panel.

C. Site:

1. Character of surrounding structures: Two- and three-story attached row houses and commercial buildings.
2. Traffic patterns: Two lanes run counter-clockwise around the circle.
3. Vistas: A vista from the east side of the park along East Capitol Street leads to Robert F. Kennedy Stadium, and from the west side of the park is

¹⁴ Goode, 86-88.

an interrupted view of the U.S. Capitol. The Washington Monument is visible from the center of the park. Stanton Square is clearly visible along Massachusetts Avenue from the northwest corner of the park.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps:

Boschke, A. "Topographical Map of the District of Columbia surveyed in the years '57, '58, and '59."

District of Columbia Board of Public Works. "Exhibit Chart of Improved Streets and Avenues." 1872.

Ellicott, Andrew. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1792.

L'Enfant, Pierre Charles. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1791.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Map of the City of Washington showing the Public Reservations Under Control of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds." 1884, 1887, and 1894.

Toner, Joseph M. "Sketch of Washington in Embryo." 1874.

B. Park plans: See Supplemental Information below for a list of attached plans. Additional plans are located at the Office of Land Use, National Capital Region and the National Archives Cartographic Division:

1855: Park plan showing dimensions of reservation and several straight pathways (NARA RG42 NCP-0-22).

C. Early Views:

1903: Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln Park, view of Emancipation statue with children and lodge in background (Annual Report . . ., 1903).

1911: New Entrance, Lincoln Park, view looking east (Annual Report . . ., 1911, 2972).

1927: Photograph taken during survey of reservations (NPS Reservation Files).

D. Bibliography:

Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers. 1867-1933.

French, Benjamin B. Reports of the Commissioner of Public Buildings. 1855-66.

Goode, James M. The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, DC. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974.

Hawkins, Don A. "The Landscape of the Federal City, A 1792 Walking Tour." Washington History 3 (Spring/Summer, 1991): 10-33.

McNeil, Priscilla W. "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." Washington History 3 (Spring/Summer, 1991): 34-51.

Nickels, Marilyn W. "Emancipation Statue, Lincoln Park." CRM 1, February, 1990: 19-21.

Record Group 42, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA RG42).

Reservation files, Office of Land Use, National Capital Region, National Park Service.

Olszewski, George J. Lincoln Park. Division of History, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Washington D.C., 1968.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Barthold
Project Historian
National Park Service
1993

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

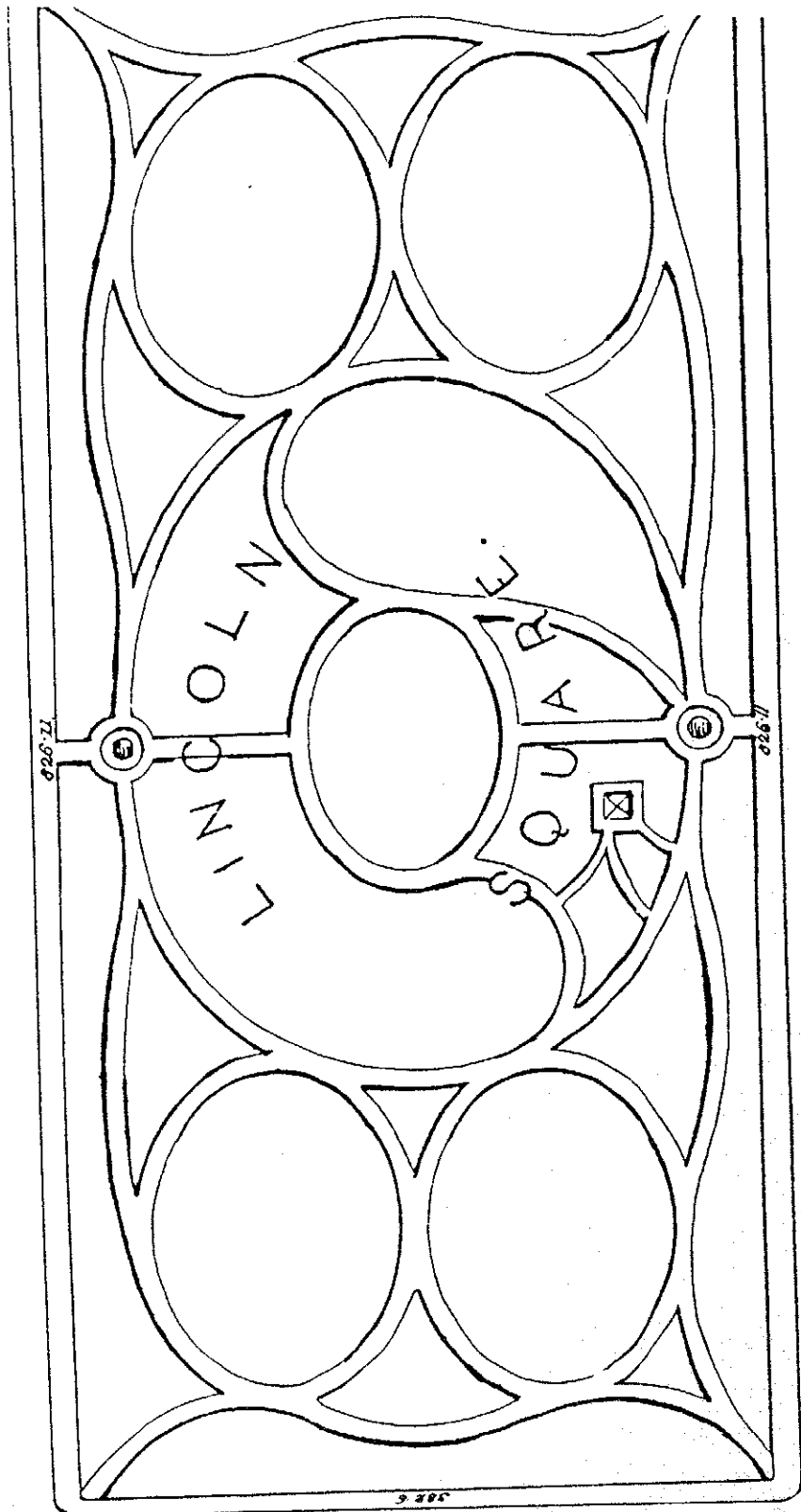
HABS historian Sara Amy Leach was the project leader and Elizabeth J. Barthold was project historian. Architectural delineators were: Robert Arzola, HABS; Julianne Jorgensen, University of Maryland; Robert Juskevich, Catholic University of America; Sandra M. E. Leiva, US/ICOMOS-Argentina; and Tomasz Zweich, US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Gardens and Palace Conservation. Katherine Grandine served as a data collector. The photographs are by John McWilliams, Atlanta, except for the aerial views, which are by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, courtesy of the U.S. Park Police - Aviation Division.

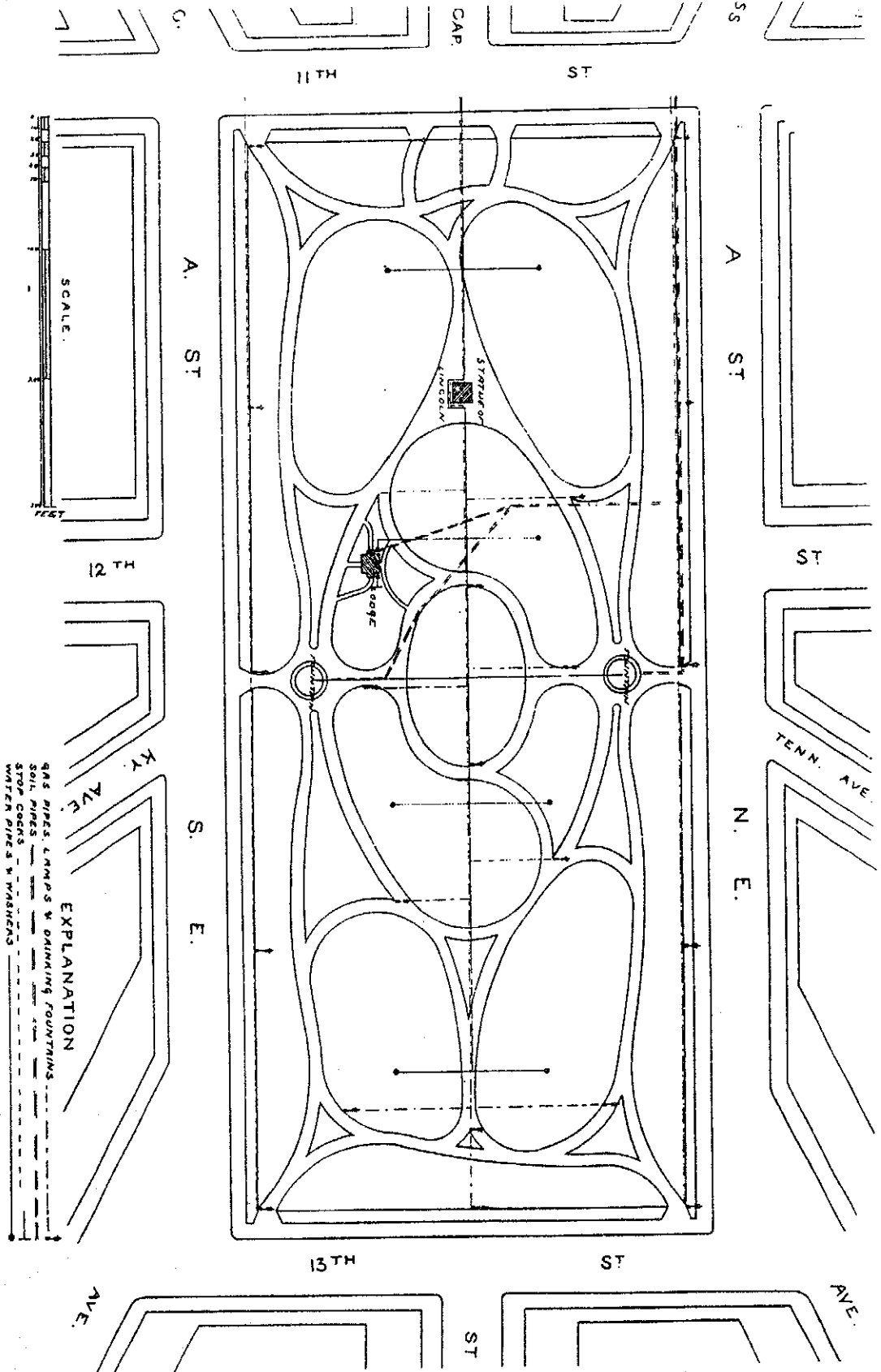
PART V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

- | | | |
|-------------|-------|--|
| Page 10 | 1876: | Park plan showing meandering path layout and the location of the lodge and fountains, "Government Reservations within the City Boundaries," <u>City Lots</u> , Real Estate Directory 1873-74, 10. NARA RG42 230) |
| Page 11 | 1885: | Park plan showing paths and locations of lamps, drinking fountains, and underground gas and water pipes (<u>Annual Report . . .</u> , 1885). |
| Page 12, 13 | 1905: | Park plan with accompanying list identifying each tree by species (<u>Annual Report . . .</u> , 1905). |

Page 14	1923:	Park plan showing path layout and labeling each tree by species.
Page 15	1931:	Park plan showing new path layout and labeling each tree by species.
Page 16	1973:	Existing site plan with tree identification.
Page 17	1984:	Site grading plan.

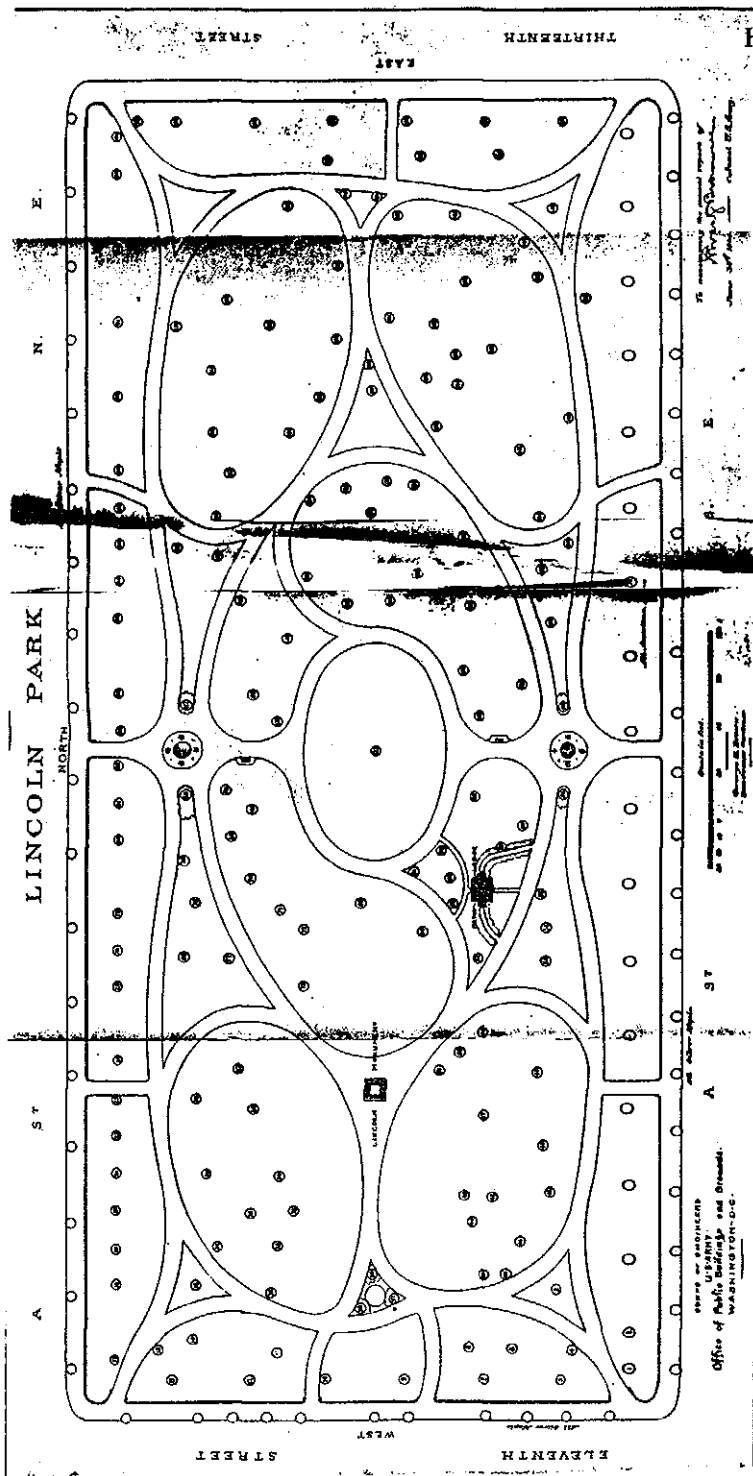
10.





*To Accompany Annual Report of Officer
in Charge of Police Buildings and Grounds
for the year ending June 30, 1886.*

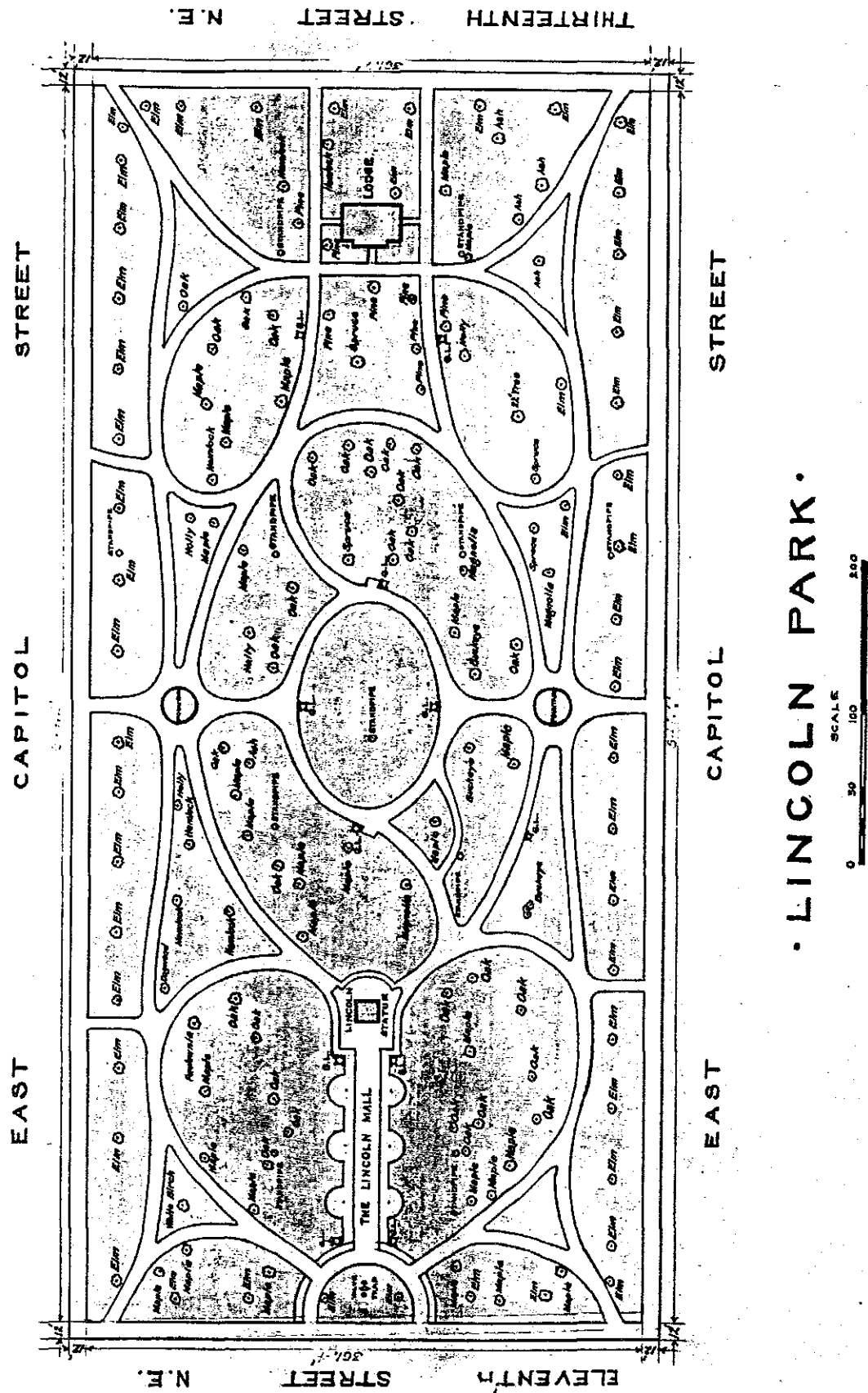
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LINCOLN PARK.

The trees on the curb lines of the sidewalks of A street south and A street north of the park, and Eleventh street east of the park, are all silver maples—*Acer saccharinum*, native deciduous tree. The trees inside the park line bordering the park from Eleventh street to Thirteenth street are 1, 2, American linden—*Tilia americana*, native deciduous tree—and all the rest of the line, American elms—*Ulmus americana*, native deciduous tree.]

Numbers.	Common name.	Botanical name.	Designation.
8.	White birch	<i>Betula populifolia</i>	Native deciduous tree.
9, 40, 46, 56, 68, 70.	Red maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Do.
2, 73, 106, 107, 150.			
1, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17.	American elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>	Do.
18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 52.			
38, 80, 82, 84, 85, 87.			
39, 90, 91, 92, 93, 96.			
7, 98, 149, 160, 161.			
162.			
14, 29, 47, 57, 62, 65.	Sugar maple	<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Do.
112, 113, 116, 124.			
140, 146, 148.			
11, 15, 85, 144, 147.	Norway maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Do.
162, 164.			
21, 23, 78, 81, 83.	American linden	<i>Tilia americana</i>	Do.
16, 88, 94, 118, 142.			
143.			
55.	Imperial tree	<i>Paulownia imperialis</i>	Foreign deciduous tree.
28, 30, 31, 32, 44.	Scarlet oak	<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	Native deciduous tree.
18, 49, 71, 108, 109.			
125, 157, 129, 130.			
134, 135, 136.			
45, 46, 50, 66, 110.	Willow oak	<i>Quercus phellos</i>	Do.
111, 121, 127, 128.			
131, 132, 133.			
41.	Scotch elm	<i>Ulmus montana</i>	Do.
37, 38, 56, 69, 117.	Spanish bayonet	<i>Yucca aloifolia</i>	Native evergreen shrub.
137.			
43.	White oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>	Native deciduous tree.
54, 58, 123, 126.	Buckeye	<i>Aesculus glabra</i>	Do.
	California privet hedge	<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>	Native deciduous shrub.
61.	Japan snowball shrub	<i>Viburnum plicatum</i>	Foreign deciduous shrub.
	Lovely Weigela	<i>Weigela amabilis</i>	Do.
138.	Large-flowering magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Native evergreen tree.
	Black ash	<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>	Native deciduous tree.
115, 120, 156.	American holly	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	Native evergreen tree.
76, 77, 99, 102, 114.	Hemlock	<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	Do.
139, 141, 159.			
10, 101, 102, 158.	American Arbor vitae	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	Native deciduous tree.
3, 104, 106, 151, 152.	White pine	<i>Pinus strobus</i>	Native evergreen tree.
154, 155.			
2.	European plane tree	<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	Foreign deciduous tree.
3.	English field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	Do.

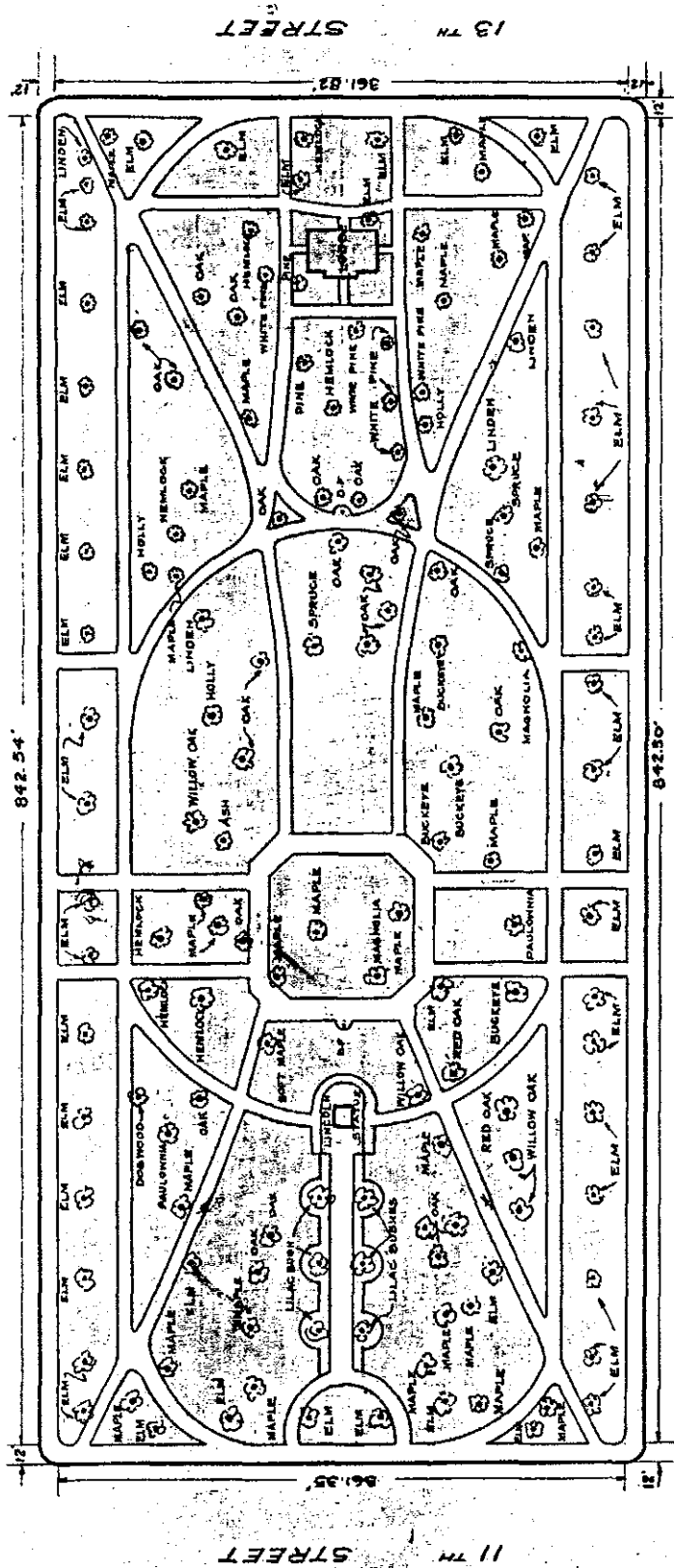


LINCOLN PARK
SCALE 1"=100' APPROX.

EAST CAPITOL STREET

842.54'

EAST



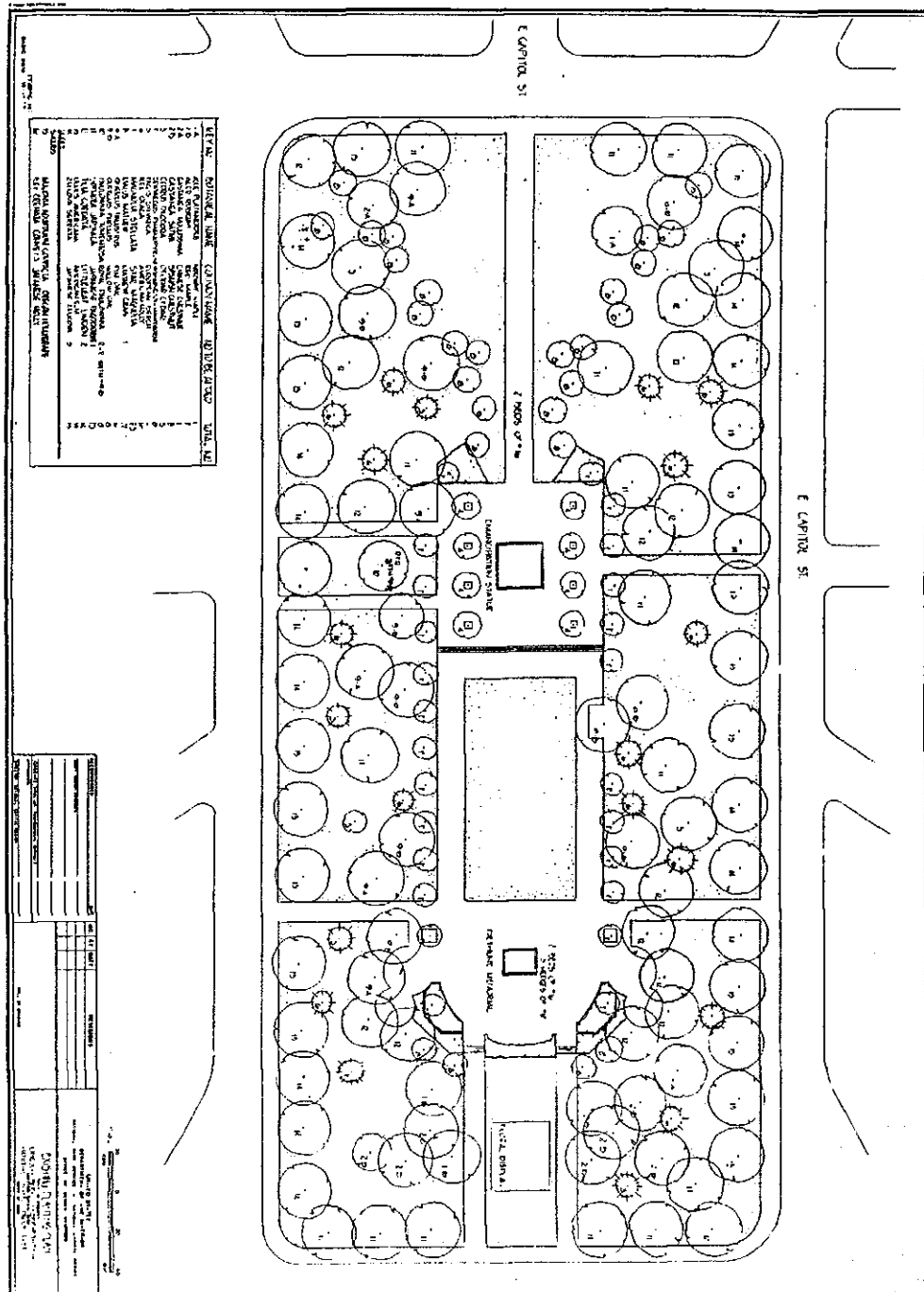
STREET

CAPITOL

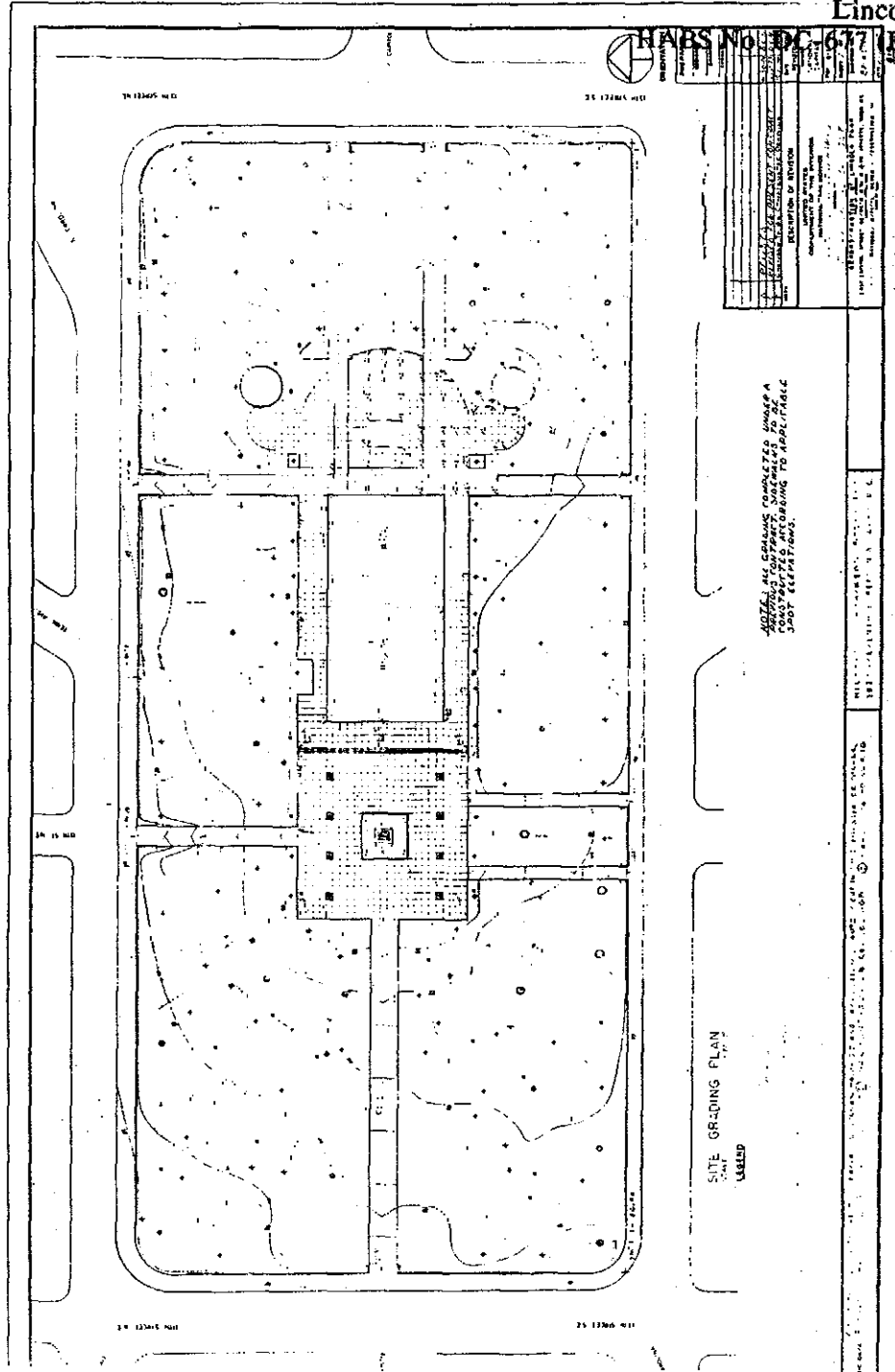
EAST

RES. NO. 14
X-17A & 37-17B (30.0-14)

Aug 20, 1931



HABS No. DC 677



NOTE: ALL GRADES COMPLETED UNDER A
CONTRACT TO BE COMPLETED BY THE U.S. ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20315.
GRADES TO BE USED FOR 3000 FEET
ELEVATIONS.

SITE GRADING PLAN
LAKED